



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



THE SENATE

PROOF

**QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE:
TAKE NOTE OF ANSWERS**

Hospitals

SPEECH

Tuesday, 15 March 2016

BY AUTHORITY OF THE SENATE

SPEECH

<p>Date Tuesday, 15 March 2016 Page 40 Questioner Speaker Fawcett, Sen David</p>	<p>Source Senate Proof Yes Responder Question No.</p>
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Senator FAWCETT (South Australia—Deputy Government Whip in the Senate) (16:19): I am so pleased that Senator Polley mentioned the budget papers and what is happening to funding. Yes, we have the perspective that is put forward by the AMA and we have the perspective that is put forward by those opposite, but Senator Polley has so helpfully said, 'What do the budget papers say?' Well, I just happen to have in front of me here table 8 from the budget, which is a summary of expenses in health, looking at the expenditure in this area. It is fascinating to look at the health spending across the forward estimates. It says it was \$67.037 million in 2014-15 and \$69.381 million in 2015-16 and is \$71.634 million in 2016-17, \$74.076 in 2017-18 and \$79.987 million in 2018-19. I did not major in maths at university, but I have to say that even somebody with a basic understanding can see that that is a year-on-year increase in the total expenditure on health.

But let us break that down into the areas that people raised in question time today. We see that funding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health increases from \$740 million to \$743 million to \$809 million to \$893 million and to \$931 million by 2018-19. In terms of assistance to the states for public hospitals—which was another one of the areas raised—we see that funding was \$15,459 million in 2014-15 and goes through to \$18,873 million by 2018-19. So what we see are year-on-year increases. Senator Polley made a comment about a government that cuts funding to health and to those who are most in need. As I have just shown, this government is increasing funding year on year compared to what has happened in the past.

But let us look at the side of politics that does cut health. Just last year in South Australia I was in Mt Gambier speaking to the community there, who were quite upset because the funding for palliative care services had been cut. There had been a 50 per cent cut in palliative care services. The state minister for health at the time—Labor minister Jack Snelling—said that that was because of 'these dastardly federal funding cuts'.

Senator Lines interjecting—

Senator FAWCETT: When I looked into it—unlike what Senator Lines just said—it was not right; it was a complete fabrication. The fact is that, going back to the partnership agreement between the then Labor government in Canberra and the Labor government in South Australia, the funding that had been allocated for palliative care services ran out in 2014. So, contrary to the comment from those opposite and the comment from Mr Snelling that these were a result of the coalition cuts, this was actually an agreement that was reached between the South Australian government and the Labor federal government that resulted in that cut.

What did we see? We saw the pattern again of those opposite, and their counterparts in the state, trying to blame the coalition. But, if we have a look at their own conduct, we can see that, not only did they sign that agreement; but, going back to the 2012-13 MYEFO, the Australian Primary Health Care Research Institute at the Australian National University—that is an organisation that is not a great supporter of the coalition—did some inquiries into that, and this is what they said:

The hidden disaster in the 2012-13 MYEFO—

and I pause there to note that was under a Labor government—

is the hit (unacknowledged by anyone in the government) taken by preventive and public health. We know that \$1.5 billion over four years ... has been cut from the National Health Reform funding.

So, if you want to look at health spending, look at the coalition government; it increases funding year on year in every state around the country, whether it is for Indigenous health or hospital health. Despite the claims from those opposite, if we look at the facts the facts show that they are the ones who actually cut funding, and in this case it was up to \$1.5 billion from the national health reform funding. There is only one side of politics the Australian people can trust— (*Time expired*)